(iii) Zam Zam water not being provided to the pilgrims; (iv) Handling of passengers; and (v) Delays of flights. All complaints received are examined and the suggestions made therein are evaluated with a view to streamlining the forthcoming Haj operations for the benefit of the pilgrims. Most of the complaints pertaining to baggage delivery and Zam Zam water have already been addressed.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED AND UNSTARRED QUESTIONS SET FOR 5TH MAY, 2008@

Reform agenda in higher education

*541. SHRIMATI KANIMOZHI:
SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether according to the plan approved by the Union Cabinet, the Planning Commission is setting up Inter-Ministerial Working Group to work out the finer details of the reform agenda in higher education;

(b) whether all Central assistance would be linked with implementation of strong reform, aimed at restructuring higher education;

(c) if so, whether this working Group has already submitted its recommendations;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) by when a final decision in this regard is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ARJUN SINGH): (a) to (e) In the Eleventh Plan document, the Planning Commission has, *inter-alia,* suggested that an Inter-Ministerial Group should be set up to work out a detailed reforms agenda in higher education. While no such Group has been constituted, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has initiated steps for academic reforms in higher education by addressing all the universities to urgently take up various reforms including the examination reforms doing away with annual examination by introducing semester system with continuous internal assessment, introduction of credit-based courses, regular curricula revision, credit accumulation and credit transfer system to permit mobility of students. As of now, grant of central assistance is not linked to reforms.

A Review Committee comprising eminent academics and Government representatives from Planning Commission, Finance and the Human Resource Development Ministries, has been set up to review the role of University Grants Commission and the All India Council for Technical Education, in the context of changes in higher, professional and technical education in the country and demands of a knowledge economy.

Indians employed in US

*542. SHRI KAMAL AKHTAR: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to refer to answer to Starred Question 142, given in the Rajya Sabha on the 10th March, 2008 and state:

(a) the source from where the figures that twelve per cent of the scientists, thirty-eight per

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@The sitting of the Rajya Sabha on Monday, the 5th May, 2008 was adjourned on account of passing away of **Kumari Nirmala Despande**, a sitting member. Answers to questions put down in the lists for that day were laid on the Table of the House on Tuesday, the 6th May, 2008.

cent of the doctors and thirty-six per cent of the NASA scientists in the US are Indians, were quoted;

(b) whether the US Government or the Central Government has conducted any survey or published any report in this regard;

(c) whether the NASA administration and some Indian newspapers have declared these figures, as incorrect;

(d) whether these figures were quoted from an internet spam; and

(e) if so, the reasons for giving such an answer in the House?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ARJUN SINGH): (a) to (e) In reply to supplementaries arising out of Starred Question No. 142 on 10.3.2008 certain statistics in regard to Indian professionals placed in the United States were mentioned on behalf of the Government. The thrust of the reply was that Indian students are doing reasonably well and they are occupying high positions, which reflects well on the quality of education that is being provided in India. The said statistics were taken from an article published in a reputed Telugu Newspaper. Subsequently it has been brought to the notice of the Government that there could be some variations in those statistics, for which sincere regrets are expressed. Yet it may be mentioned that the thrust of the said reply is corroborated by the figures given by "the American Community — Asians: 2004" compiled by the US Census Bureau according to which the percentage of the entire American population (including Indians) of age 16 and above engaged as Management professionals and related occupations is 34.1%, of which, the percentage of Asian Indians is 60.6%.

Running of Distance Education Courses

*543. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Distance Education Council, IGNOU is the only competent authority to give recognition/approval for running Distance Edcuation Courses, both technical and non-technical, to universities/institutions;

(b) whether there is any role of University Grants Commission (U.G.C.) in respect of Distance Education Courses run by Central/State/Deemed universities;

(c) whether it is mandatory for the Indian Universities to take approval for their distance education/technical courses from All Indian Council for Technical Education (AICTE); and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ARJUN SINGH): (a) As per the provision under Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) Act, 1985 the Distance Education Council (DEC) is responsible for promotion, coordination and determination of standards of teaching, evaluation and research in distance education system in the country.

(b) The University Grants Commission (UGC) by virtue of the provisions under UGC Act, 1956 has the general duty for promotion and coordination of university education and for determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in universities, including those offering distance education courses, and for the above purpose cause an inspection. Further, the universities, including those offering distance education courses, can confer only such degrees, as may, with the previous approval of the Central Government, be so specified by UGC in this behalf by notification in the official Gazette.